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	VC-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-00
	NSAE-00	OES-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00	EPAU-00	PA-00	PM-00
	GIWI-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SGAC-00	SP-00	TRSE-00
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SUBJECT: OUTLOOK FOR RURAL AREA DWELLERS BLEAK

11. SUMMARY: The outlook for Botswana's Remote Area Dwellers (RADs) is bleak, despite the Government of Botswana's multifaceted efforts to improve their standard of living. RADs endure high rates of poverty and unemployment, exacerbated by limited access to natural resources (especially land), a dearth of skills and their isolation from potential markets. Prejudice against San (Basarwa), who constitute the majority of RADs, is widespread. A climate of despair and dependence has emerged within this most marginalized community, further inhibiting progress. The RADs' best hope may lie in migration to towns in search of employment. In spite of the hardships, RADs are generally pro-Government. This is because they generally agree with the Government's policy objectives and lack leaders capable of mobilizing RADs and advocating for their interests. Formation of a San Council might give RADs more effective representation in dealing with the Government. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND OF THE RADP

12. In 1975, the Government of Botswana established the Basarwa Development Program, to address the "cultural, social and spatial" impediments to development within this marginalized community. Three years later, the Government expanded that program to include residents of remote areas from all ethnic groups and renamed it the Remote Area Development Program (RADP). San, or Basarwa, still constitute the overwhelming majority of RADs. Other ethnic groups commonly found in RAD settlements include the Kgalagadi, Herero and Bayei. In 1989, the program further evolved to focus on establishing permanent settlements in regions where RADs were most concentrated: Northwest, Kweneng, Central, Ghanzi, Kgalagadi, Southern, and Kgatleng Districts. The Government encouraged RADs to move to these locales so that it could more efficiently provide public services and promote productive economic activities. PolOff traveled to several RAD settlements in December to evaluate conditions there.

13. The RADP aims to achieve sustainable social and economic development of Batswana living in remote areas and to ensure equal access to the benefits of the country's overall material progress. The Government intends to accomplish this objective through the following: providing infrastructure and public services comparable to those available elsewhere in the country, promoting gainful employment, enhancing access to land and other natural resources, encouraging participation in the nation's political process and the cultivation of community leaders, ensuring access to education and training at all levels, and facilitating the integration of RADs into the mainstream of society. Through the RADP, the GOB has built clinics, schools, police stations and administrative centers, granted livestock, offered free vocational training, and provided for the education of RAD children including the costs of transportation, books and uniforms. After nearly thirty years, however, the RADP is far from successful.

EMPLOYMENT VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTENT

14. The key to the failure of the RADP is the lack of income-generating opportunities in the rural areas. Regular employment at RAD settlements is virtually non-existent. In some places, a few individuals work for an NGO or a cooperative; anyone else with a job works for the Government. Many of those employed by the Government in these settlements are not RADs themselves but civil servants on a temporary assignment.

15. Almost everyone in a RAD settlement depends upon state aid of some kind for subsistence. The elderly receive pensions, and most receive destitute rations (food and clothing in kind with a small cash allowance). It is not uncommon for those who qualify for such assistance not to receive it. The able-bodied occasionally find employment with the Government as laborers on public works projects through the Drought Relief Program. The miniscule dimensions of the cash economy in each of these settlements require almost any would-be entrepreneur to target external markets. The isolation of these settlements -- vehicles are scarce, roads are poor and tarred roads are often over an hour away by car -- makes selling to larger villages and towns difficult.

LIVESTOCK DISTRIBUTION AN IMPERFECT SOLUTION

16. The GOB has pursued livestock-rearing as the most immediate solution to poverty in RAD settlements, but with mixed results. Through the RADP, a family can receive five head of cattle or fifteen goats free of charge. The Government encourages recipients not to slaughter any of these animals until five years has passed, in the hope that they will have reproduced enough to become a self-sustainable herd. When owners are ready to sell, district councils assist them in transporting the animals to a Botswana Meat Commission abattoir and to collect payment.

17. According to a report prepared by the Ghanzi District Council, however, this aspect of the program has yielded "very poor" results there. That document attributed this dismal performance to "poor management, lack of commitment and indiscriminate slaughter of livestock." Residents of Kaudwane in Kweneng District complained to PolOff that lions decimated their herds and that they received inadequate compensation (less than half the replacement cost) from the Government.

18. Local governments have not ignored these problems. The Ghanzi District Council, for example, provided workshops and seminars to improve livestock management and decided to experiment with establishing a herd in the name of a particular settlement. The District currently manages that herd but plans eventually to turn over control to the community, which will own the cattle. The Kweneng District has assigned an animal health professional to reside and work in Kaudwane and has tasked that person with looking at ways to improve the productivity of goat herding there.

ACCESS TO LAND LIMITED

19. While unemployment and poverty are common nationwide -- recent estimates place unemployment at about 24 percent and the incidence of poverty at about 30 percent -- limited access to land exacerbates these problems in RAD settlements. The Government designates land for communal use around each settlement and allocates residential plots within them but has not facilitated private holding of farm/pasture land by RADs. They are free to apply for land allocation like any other citizen, but they face difficulty in meeting the requirements of this process, including completion of application forms and preparation of a management plan. Not surprisingly, land boards tend to favor large-scale commercial land use proposals that require capital inputs beyond the resources of most RADs. Indeed, a senior local government official told PolOff that he had yet to hear of a RAD acquiring his or her own farm. Another indicated that the Government prefers "to keep them in the settlements for now."

110. In some areas of Botswana, land available for use by RADs is growing scarce. The GOB is gradually converting communal land to privately held land by offering long term leases on concessional terms for farmers who will use and improve the land. Improvement includes sinking a borehole and fencing the property, which, of course, requires capital. Any RADs living on communal land

reallocated to a private holder become squatters subject to eviction.

11. Some NGOs have assisted RADs to form consortia and apply for leases jointly. One organization found, however, that all of the groups it helped to apply that consisted only of San were denied, while some groups that included other ethnicities were approved. This ensued despite the fact that they all had roughly equal qualifications and the same help in preparing their applications. A second NGO had helped a consortium of three RAD settlements to secure a lease for a plot, but the group lacked the capital to implement its business plan. Another RAD settlement had established a community trust which had obtained a lease but was similarly delayed in initiating its enterprise due to insufficient funds.

ACCESS TO OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES LIMITED

12. Access to other natural resources, such as wildlife products, is even more restricted. Rights to hunt game are allocated through a lottery, and one must pay a fee to the Government based on the numbers of each type of animal killed. Residents of Kaudwane and New Xade, the vast majority of whom were relocated there from the CKGR, were promised Special Game Licenses allowing them to hunt a limited amount of game without having to pay any fee. But because game was sparse in the areas surrounding these settlements where hunting was permitted, the Special Game Licenses were rarely used.

13. Entrance to the CKGR, like any other national park in Botswana, requires a permit obtainable only from the Department of Wildlife in Gaborone if the visitor intends to remain in the park overnight. Hunting is prohibited in the CKGR, and RADs who travel into the Reserve are not allowed to bring out any wildlife products. Such restrictions inhibit the potential for income-generating activities that would utilize natural resources. An NGO working with RADs to produce craft products, for example, must import ostrich egg shells from South Africa because regulations do not permit collection of sufficient quantities locally.

14. Residents of both New Xade and Kaudwane explained to PolOff that they had ideas for setting up eco-/cultural tourism enterprises. To succeed, however, they would need access to some land within the CKGR due to the absence of game and veld food (the wide variety of plants that San traditionally relied upon for food, water, medicine, etc.) outside the Reserve. At one point, the Government had considered designating areas within the CKGR as community use zones for just such projects. One resident of New Xade told PolOff that the former Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism subsequently had visited the community and told them to "forget about" that possibility and suggested setting up a "cultural village" as a tourist attraction instead. The GOB has yet to issue a final master plan for land use management in the CKGR.

DIAMOND EXPLORATION PLANNED

15. No diamond mining is occurring in the CKGR at present but a subsidiary of BHP Billiton, Sekaka Diamonds, plans to conduct aerial surveys over the Reserve in 2005. A poster nailed to a tree in the village of Gugamma in the CKGR announced that ground surveys will follow if the company encounters any "interesting" results. Residents told PolOff that Sekaka representatives had visited to consult with them about the matter in early December. According to Roy Sesana, head of the First People of the Kalahari, the organization challenging the Government's relocation policy in court, he met with the same officials in November to discuss potential employment opportunities for those who live in the reserve in conjunction with such exploration.

16. This is not, however, a "smoking gun" demonstrating that the Government displaced people to obtain mining profits. The Reserve encompasses enough territory to accommodate a mine in one area, residents in another, and protected wildlife elsewhere. Diamond exploration licenses cover much of the Botswana's land area, not just the CKGR. While previous surveys and mining attempts determined that the ore in the Reserve was not economical to extract, technological advances have made renewed exploration worthwhile.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING MAKES LITTLE HEADWAY

¶17. Lack of marketable skills also contributes to poverty and unemployment among RADs. The GOB offers RADs vocational training free of charge and seed capital to return to one's settlement and begin a small business. RADP officers complained, however, that few RADs take advantage of this opportunity. Many of those who start such training abandon it. Visits by PolOff to several RAD settlements found no one who had derived a regular income from skills acquired through this program. Several had started working, only to fold after a few months, usually, but not always, due to a lack of clients. In one instance, a sewing and knitting project was offered the opportunity to supply garments to the local school, but the artisans simply did not want to produce the volume of garments the school would require.

Absent success in forming their own businesses, the RADs' best job prospects to counter this culture of despair and dependency may lie in finding employment in towns.

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE SUBSTANTIAL BUT TROUBLED

¶18. Local government interlocutors generally pointed to formal education as the ultimate key to development among RADs. Residents of RAD settlements likewise emphasized to PolOff the importance of education and their appreciation of the Government's assistance in that regard. The Government has established primary schools in almost every RAD settlement and pre-schools in many of them. RAD children pay no school fees, eat two meals a day at school, and receive uniforms for free. The Government also bears the expense of sending children to boarding school for secondary education, including costs of transportation and pocket money for the students.

¶19. These benefits notwithstanding, the educational aspect of the RADP faces problems. In Ghanzi District, thousands of RADs live on private farms, either as workers or squatters. Children of these individuals, as well as of the few remaining residents of the CKGR, must live in hostels located in villages with schools from a young age. The fact that instruction is in Setswana and English after pre-school and not in the mother tongue discourages some students. Additionally, different practices regarding disciplinary customs - San typically do not use corporal punishment, whereas paddling is a common practice in Botswana's public schools - and prejudice against San children make school a difficult environment for some RAD children. Thus, truancy is high.

CULTURAL OBSTACLES ABOUND

¶20. Prejudice against San remains widespread. PolOff encountered assertions that they could not "think for themselves," did not teach their children right from wrong, or did not value education. Officials frequently emphasized the need for the Government to patiently guide RADs in the process of development. One official described the GOB's objective as instilling a "cattle-rearing culture" in RADs. A resident of New Xade confirmed this effect of the RADP, telling PolOff that the migration from the CKGR entailed adoption of the culture of "the rest of Botswana" and the loss of the traditions practiced by his parents.

¶21. Residents of RAD settlements and members of NGOs who worked with them pointed to a number of cultural obstacles to development among RADs themselves. RADs relocated in New Xade and Kaudwane grew up largely in a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. Thus, some find the idea of working all day on the same (sometimes monotonous task) unacceptable, as in the case of sewers and knitters noted above. Some interlocutors described a spirit of despair and dependence that dominated the atmosphere of these locations. According to these contacts, RADs tended to assume that a significant improvement in their situation was not possible or thought that any such change could only come from the Government or an NGO. Participation in different income generation programs, as a result, was low. The prevalence of alcoholism further undermined hope for progress.

¶22. Historically, San organized themselves into family groups. With no chiefs, they are unrepresented on Botswana's Council of Chiefs, where other Batswana groups have a voice. The Government has instituted the practice of appointing headmen in the RAD settlements, but no overarching leadership has emerged to promote RAD interests in Botswana's narrowly constructed political

arena.

HIV-AIDS IN RAD SETTLEMENTS

123. Although the isolation of RAD settlement might afford some measure of protection from HIV-AIDS, the disease remains a problem nevertheless. The headman in Kaudwane noted to PolOff that the construction teams working on roads and buildings in the settlement contributed to its spread there. Services related to HIV-AIDS, such as counselling, testing, and treatment are not

as readily-available to RADs as to other Batswana. They must often travel long distances just to test, and this deters many from bothering. Keeping down the HIV-AIDS rate in remote settings will be necessary to boost economic development in those areas.

RADS GENERALLY PRO-GOVERNMENT

124. The bleak situation in RAD settlements has not translated into resentment toward the state or the ruling party. Interlocutors in these places generally observed that while the GOB had not done all it could, or even all that it had promised, it was not neglecting them. Some expressed frustration with policies limiting access to the CKGR as fatally undermining the best prospects for income generation in these settlements. Others faulted the Government for not providing infrastructural improvements it had promised. These criticisms revealed a general consensus that the Government was doing the right things, but not rapidly enough or with sufficient resources.

125. A vocal minority dismissed these concerns as secondary to the fundamental issue of land rights. They argued that resettlement from the CKGR wrongfully alienated them from their ancestral territory. The election in New Xade and Kaudwane, where animosity toward the GOB over the relocation policy runs highest, of district councillors from the ruling BDP, illustrates the general perception among most RADs that the Government is an imperfect ally, not an enemy.

126. Conversations with residents of New Xade and Kaudwane, to which former residents of the CKGR were resettled, indicate that only a minority wish to return. A small number of San are trickling back into the Reserve. If the First People of the Kalahari were to win its court case and secure restoration of basic public services, most notably the provision of water, others probably would join them. A number of those who had left the CKGR suggested to PolOff, however, that any returnees would consist primarily of the elderly, especially those relocated in 2002. Only a minority of those relocated before 2002 appear to be interested in living in the Reserve.

COMMENT

127. Contrary to the rhetoric of some critics, the GOB is not perpetrating genocide against the San or other RADs. The Government's efforts have focused on improving the standard of living for the RADs. While programs may have been under-funded and the results sketchy, district councils are trying new approaches to improve outcomes. Many of the problems plaguing RADs -- HIV/AIDS, unemployment, loss of livestock to predators -- afflict all rural Batswana, not just RADs. Prejudice against the San, while common, has not precluded meaningful assistance from the Government.

128. Enhancing access to natural resources, especially land, is key to further improvement in the living conditions of RADs. With the Government open to the idea of diamond mining within the CKGR, it might also consider controlled use of parts of the Reserve by its former and current residents for enterprises in the tourism.

129. Sustained improvement of the RADP would require political leadership that could credibly represent RADs in negotiation with the Government. First People of the Kalahari foreclosed the possibility of playing this role when it internationalised its dispute with the Government. Less confrontational organizations that work with RADs, such as Permaculture Trust, Kuru Trust and the Botswana Center for Human Rights might be able to lobby more effectively should they choose to do so.

130. One solution posited by RADS to assure more

effective representation is to form a San Council. Embassy received a Democracy and Human Rights Fund proposal in 2004 from the Kuru Trust to assist in the formation of such a council, but the proposal lacked details. In an early December visit to Shakawe, DCM asked the Kuru Trust to focus and resubmit its proposal so that the Embassy would be better able to evaluate it. With the RADs in a single organization, the Government would have a stronger partner for discussion.

31. Support for mother-tongue education could help preserve San culture and, in the long term, cultivate leadership indigenous to RAD communities. Kuru Trust has requested assistance from Debswana to set up two such schools to cater for RADs. Although the linguistic diversity among San would pose an obstacle, this effort could decrease truancy rates, counter the effects of prejudice, and provide focal points for community organization, all leading to a brighter future for RADs.

HUGGINS

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